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# **“What is a good project manager?”**

## **Reconceptualizing the “do”: an Aristotelian perspective**

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*“In the Aristotelian tradition to call something good is to make a factual statement. To ask, for example, ‘what is a good captain?’ is not to come up with a list of attributes that good captains share [...] but to point out the things that those who are recognized as good captains do.” (Tsoukas & Cummings, 1997, p. 670)*

For Aristotle “we cannot be prudent [i.e. wise] without being good and we cannot be fully good without being prudent, taking the particulars of the situation into account” (Eikeland, 2008, p. 64, [our addition]).

## Introduction

In Social Science (Organization Studies, Economics, Management Science, Strategy, International Relations, Political Science...) the quest for addressing the question “what is a good practitioner?” has been around for centuries, with the underlying assumptions that good practitioners should lead organizations to higher levels of performance. Hence to ask “*what is a good “captain”?*” is not a new question, we should add! (e.g. Tsoukas & Cummings, 1997, p. 670; Söderlund, 2004, p. 190).

This interrogation leads to consider problems such as the relations between dichotomies Theory and Practice, rigor and relevance of research, ways of knowing and knowledge forms. On the one hand we face the “Enlightenment” assumptions underlying modern positivist Social science, grounded in “*unity-of-science dream of transforming and reducing all kinds of knowledge to one basic form and level*” and cause-effects relationships (Eikeland, 2012, p. 20), and on the other, the postmodern interpretivist proposal, and its “*tendency to make all kinds of knowing equivalent*” (Eikeland, 2012, p. 20). In the project management space, this aims at addressing one of the fundamental problems in the field: projects still do not deliver their expected benefits and promises and therefore the socio-economical good (Hodgson & Cicmil, 2007; Bredillet, 2010, Lalonde et al., 2012). The Cartesian tradition supporting projects research and practice for the last 60 years (Bredillet, 2010, p. 4) has led to the lack of relevance to practice of the current conceptual base of project management, despite the sum of research, development of standards, best & good practices and the related development of project management bodies of knowledge (Packendorff, 1995, p. 319-323; Cicmil & Hodgson, 2006, p. 2–6, Hodgson & Cicmil, 2007, p. 436–7; Winter et al., 2006, p. 638). Referring to both Hodgson (2002) and Giddens (1993), we could say that “*those who expect a “social-scientific Newton” to revolutionize this young field “are not only waiting for a train that will not arrive, but are in the wrong station altogether*” (Hodgson, 2002, p. 809; Giddens, 1993, p. 18). While, in the postmodern stream mainly rooted in the “practice turn” (e.g. Hällgren & Lindahl, 2012), the shift from methodological individualism to social viscosity and the advocated pluralism lead to reinforce the “*functional stupidity*” (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012, p. 1194) this postmodern stream aims at overcoming.

We suggest here that addressing the question “what is a good PM?” requires a philosophy of practice perspective to complement the “usual” philosophy of science perspective. The questioning of the modern Cartesian tradition mirrors a similar one made within Social science (Say, 1964; Koontz, 1961, 1980; Menger, 1985; Warry, 1992; Rothbard, 1997a; Tsoukas & Cummings, 1997; Flyvbjerg, 2001; Boisot & McKelvey, 2010), calling for new thinking. In order to get outside the rationalist ‘box’, Toulmin (1990, p. 11), along with Tsoukas & Cummings (1997, p. 655), suggests a possible path, summarizing the thoughts of many authors:

*“It can cling to the discredited research program of the purely theoretical (i.e. “modern”) philosophy, which will end up by driving it out of business: it can look for new and less exclusively*

*theoretical ways of working, and develop the methods needed for a more practical (“post-modern”) agenda; or it can return to its pre-17th century traditions, and try to recover the lost (“pre-modern”) topics that were side-tracked by Descartes, but can be usefully taken up for the future” (Toulmin, 1990, p. 11).*

Thus, paradoxically and interestingly, in their quest for the so-called post-modernism, many authors build on “pre-modern” philosophies such as the Aristotelian one (e.g. MacIntyre, 1985, 2007; Tsoukas & Cummings, 1997; Flyvbjerg, 2001; Blomquist et al., 2010; Lalonde et al., 2012). It is perhaps because the post-modern stream emphasizes a dialogic<sup>1</sup> process restricted to reliance on voice and textual representation, it limits the meaning of communicative praxis, and weakening the practice because it turns away attention from more fundamental issues associated with problem-definition and knowledge-for-use in action (Tedlock, 1983, p. 332–4; Schrag, 1986, p. 30, 46–7; Warry, 1992, p. 157). Eikeland suggests that the Aristotelian “gnoseology”<sup>2</sup> allows for reconsidering and reintegrating ways of knowing: traditional, practical, tacit, emotional, experiential, intuitive, etc., marginalised and considered insufficient by modernist [and post-modernist] thinking” (Eikeland, 2012, p. 20—21).

By contrast with the modernist one-dimensional thinking and relativist and pluralistic post-modernism, we suggest, in a turn to an Aristotelian pre-modern lens, to re-conceptualise (“re” involving here a “re”-turn to pre-modern thinking) the “do” and to shift the perspective from what a good PM *is* (philosophy of science lens) to what a good PM *does* (philosophy of practice lens) (Aristotle, 1926a). As Tsoukas & Cummings put it:

*“In the Aristotelian tradition to call something good is to make a factual statement. To ask, for example, ‘what is a good captain?’ is not to come up with a list of attributes that good captains share (as modern contingency theorists would have it), but to point out the things that those who are recognized as good captains do.” (Tsoukas & Cummings, 1997, p. 670)*

Thus, this conversation offers a dialogue and deliberation about a central question: What does a good project manager do? The conversation is organized around a critic of the underlying assumptions supporting the modern, post-modern and pre-modern relations to ways of knowing, forms of knowledge and “practice”.

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<sup>1</sup> “From a dialogic perspective the difference between voices in dialogue is constitutive of meaning in such a way that it makes no sense to imagine ‘overcoming’ this difference. By contrast, due to the implicit assumption that meaning is ultimately grounded on identity rather than upon difference, the dialectic perspective applied by Vygotsky interprets differences as ‘contradictions’ that need to be overcome or transcended”. (Wegerif, 2008, p. 347)

<sup>2</sup> For Eikeland (2007, p. 347) gnoseology, by contrast to epistemology, involves broader notion of knowledge. Epistêmê is just one form of gnôsis.

## **A focus on the context of temporary organizing**

We choose to consider here the project manager role as an example of “manager” and therefore, shift the organizational context and focus from classical organizations to temporary-based organization. While as an allied purpose of this paper, we suggest reversing the perspective between temporary and permanent organization, i.e. we posit that any organization is to some extent temporary, as transforming itself or part of itself in permanence: there is nothing permanent except change as stated by Heraclitus. Thus permanent organizing is an extreme case of organizing, rather than an opposing form of temporary organizing. We can therefore talk about different degrees of temporariness of organizational forms (Bakker, 2010, p. 468) and organizing phenomena. In our investigation we then consider the definition and context of temporary organizations described in the literature (e.g. Lundin & Söderholm, 1995, Packendorff, 1995<sup>3</sup>, Bakker, 2010) as being pertinent: *“temporary organizational forms should be regarded “as inexorably interwoven with an organizational and social context which provides key resources of expertise, reputation, and legitimization” (Grabher, 2004a, p. 1492)”* (Bakker, 2010, p. 468). However, in contrast with Bakker, we argue that the relationships with the broader organizational and social context are both dialectic AND dialogic (Wegerif, 2008, p. 347) rather than being strictly dialectic (Bakker, 2010, p. 481), - demonstrating some mechanisms of coordination constitutive of meaning rather than only differences to be overcome. As matter of consequence, we consider as a normal state of affairs, uncertainty (Stark, 2000, p. 3), hidden knowledge (Gomez & Jones, 2000, p. 697) and information with regards to communication and a pluralistic organizational context, i.e. *“... characterized by multiple objectives, diffuse power and knowledge-based work processes”* (Denis et al., 2007, p. 179).

## **Modern “practice”**

### **Practices and models, standards**

The following presentation enables us to clarify how modern Social science, represented below by neoclassical economics and organization theory(ies), and their key assumptions are impacting of management practices and models (i.e. standards).

#### Neoclassical economics

Neoclassical economics, the dominant and most widely used school in economics, relate to supply and demand to an individual's rationality (rational choice theory), on determination of prices and

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<sup>3</sup> Packendorff (1995, p. 327), summarizing previous works since Miles (1964), defines a temporary organization as follows: 1) *“is an organized (collective) course of action aimed at evoking a non-routine process and/or completing a non-routine product; [Proposition 1]; 2) has a predetermined point in time or time-related conditional state when the organization and/or its mission is collectively expected to cease to exist; [Proposition 2]; 3) has some kind of performance evaluation criteria; [Proposition 3]; 4) is so complex in terms of roles and number of roles that it requires conscious organizing efforts (i.e. not spontaneous self-organizing).”* [Proposition 4]

outputs, and one's ability to maximize utility and value (income constrained individuals) or profit (costs constrained firms) employing available information and factors of production. *"It based on the belief that competition leads to an efficient allocation of resources, and regulates economic activity that establishes equilibrium between demand and supply through the operation of market forces"*.

(source: <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/neo-classical-economics.html#ixzz2PuxVuxbt>, accessed 9 April 2013).

The neoclassical economics theories are guided by the following assumptions (Gomez, 2006, p. 219):

- Individual actors have rational preferences and are intelligent and capable of interpreting the signals they receive;
- They are autonomous, define the own private utility or profits – individuals maximize utility and firms maximize profits – specially the one leading them to be concerned by such or such information;
- Any exchange between actors, acting independently, is located par reciprocal, full and relevant information.

We note that management practices and models expected benefits are focusing on aspects such as increasing productivity, access to new markets, facilitate free and fair global trade. All aspects are rooted in rationality, utility and profit, and transparent information. The definition of standard<sup>4</sup> (*"... aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree of order..."*) is related to market equilibrium. Neoclassical theories such as the resource-based view (*"increasing productivity"*... and therefore providing a competitive advantage with regards to costs), the market-based view (*"need in the market"*) and the encompassing stakeholder-based view (*"multi-stakeholder process"*) integrating both the resource-based view as well as the market-based view and adding a socio-political level, are heavily called upon.

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<sup>4</sup> Standardization is an *"activity of establishing, with regard to actual or potential problems, provisions for common and repeated use, aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree of order in a given context."* (Hatto, 2010, p. 9)

For the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) a standard, developed by a panel of experts, is defined as : *"Document, established by consensus and approved by a recognized body, that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for activities or their results, aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree of order in a given context."*

*Note 1 to entry: Standards should be based on the consolidated results of science, technology and experience, and aimed at the promotion of optimum community benefits."*

(Source: ISO/IEC Guide 2:2004, definition 3.2; and ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2, 2011, p. 8; also in Hatto, 2010, p. 5).

The expected benefits of standards is to *"ensure that products and services are safe, reliable and of good quality. For business, they are strategic tools that reduce costs by minimizing waste and errors and increasing productivity. They help companies to access new markets, level the playing field for developing countries and facilitate free and fair global trade."*

(Source: <http://www.iso.org/iso/home/standards.htm>: accessed 9 March 2013).

## Organization Theory(ies)

Besides these abovementioned roots in neoclassical economics, and linked to it, three key issues are to be underscored in relation to organizational theory(ies).

### Consensus

First, management practices and models are established by *consensus* and used to facilitate interoperability, coordination and communication amongst adopters and stakeholders, relying on equilibrium-based theory (Hernes & Bakken, 2003, p. 1516) and this linear world of equilibrium enables predictability (Stacey, 2010, p. 20). This approach focuses on stable entities and structure and individuals and organizations function (not “act”) on the basis of an exchange relationship with the environment. Under this view, *mutual coordination* (Parsons & Shills, 1951) between two parties occurs via a normative orientation; ie., common norms and values that exist prior to the interaction, and “*can only take place against a common background of meaning that is abstracted from the particularity of the situation (Parsons, 1951)*” (Hernes & Bakken, 2003, p. 1516). As Mettler puts it “*Conflicts of interest can be avoided by using a measurement model developed externally to the organisation*” (Mettler, 2011, p. 82). This normative orientation forms the double contingency that is imposed on them (Hernes & Bakken, 2003, p. 1517).

### Transparent and available information

Second, management practices and models aim at enabling actions on the basis of *full and available, relevant and transparent information*. From “organization” coming from the equilibrium-based view, we are moving to “organizing” (Weick, 1974, 1979). This is supported by process-based theories where “*The focus on actions rather than structure puts the subject in the center and opens up subjective interpretations of organizational reality*” (Hernes & Bakken, 2003, p. 21). Subjects are thought to be autonomous and making rational choices, setting goals and prescriptive decisions with regards to the future on the basis of calculations using transparent information, enabling some kind of certainty or rational risk assessment. “*Control is about monitoring outcomes against the plan, the gaps being closed by appropriate actions*” (Stacey, 2010, p. 11). Management practices and models, by purposes of use, are designed supporting rational assessment on the basis of transparent information, decision-making and improvement actions.

### Certainty, stability

Third, because of the assumptions made about consensus and transparency of information, individuals are assumed able to act on the basis of stable, *certain* structures enabling complexity reduction and calculation of the likely outcomes of their actions. This assumption about certainty and order is embodied i.e. in standards (see definition in note 4). As Brunsson et al. state, standards “*are*

said to make the complex world simpler and to provide optimal or “good” solutions, policies, products and so on” (Brunsson et al. 2000, p. 16).

## Criticisms

Say (1964, p. xix-xx) mocks the naiveté of the public toward statistics:

*“Sometimes, moreover, a display of figures and calculations imposes upon them; as if numerical calculations alone could prove anything, and as if any rule could be laid down, from which an inference could be drawn without the aid of sound reasoning.”*

He argues that the mathematical method, with its seeming exactitude, can only seriously distort the analysis of qualitative human action by stretching and oversimplifying the legitimate insights of economic principles (Rothbard, 1997a, p. 42 – 43). This is acknowledged by Andriani & McKelvey (2007) who provide an insightful critique of Greene's standard textbook (2002) showing how, despite some efforts to minimize the effect of varying variances, this authors ignores “*interdependent, interacting, connectionist, interconnecting, coevolutionary, mutual causal data points, events or agents*” (Andriani & McKelvey, 2007, p. 1223).

Brunsson et al. (2000, pp. 169—172) summarize the “pros” vs. “cons” standards and standardization debate. For the “pros”, standards are effective way of transmitting information (content, compliance or accreditation/certification). They have coordinating function (products, agents) and reduce the amount of information needed. They bring some degree of simplification reducing the number of possibilities to be considered. They also facilitate information and communication, and coordination and bring about higher degree of order.. They offer “good” or “best” practices providing good or best solutions, and they support innovation and variation as organizations do not need to invest time and efforts on areas covered by their scope. Lastly they facilitate similarity; for instance, they aid managers to interface between systems, and thus making things easier for industries and consumers However the “cons” have some arguments against standards and standardization. They are seen as reducing freedom and hamper intervention from people from the outside willing to impose some kind of uniformity to products, services, markets... They lead to restrain differentiation, and thus innovation and creativity, by making people or organizations more alike. In a similar way, they are seen going too far in stabilizing the world. The motivation, or hidden agenda, of standard producers, experts, organizations, states..., is questioned and it is not seen as necessarily promoting the community benefits. But the opposite is true as well, and some think that standardization should further, as standards are too important to the world and for the protection of the community. In short the criticism can be summarized as more market vs. more regulations.

Despite this debate between the “pros” and “cons” standards and standardization, the answers brought to the performance problems organizations of all kind are facing are pretty much the same ,



that is more “standard” standardization is expected to lead to higher performance. Agents, in a broad sense, delude themselves falling into the Great Illusion of control through this equilibrium and process-based view of management practices and models, based on the “*mechanistic and rationalistic theories that have historically dominated organization and management studies*” (Tsoukas & Cummings, 1997, p. 655); this is notwithstanding the fact that, as demonstrated for instance by March & Sutton (1997), quantitative management studies, in which performance is modelled as a dependent variable, fail to deliver their promise of managerial advice. Along with other authors (Daft & Buenger, 1990; Lampel & Shapira, 1995) the general conclusion drawn by Kieser & Nicolai (2005) is that “*the search for stable success factors is as futile as the search for the philosopher’s stone*” (p. 276) and that “*the potential of performance research to create actionable knowledge is limited*” (p. 275). In a similar vein, O’Neill, in consideration to the Cynefin framework (Kurtz & Snowden, 2003) raises a key point: “*the Cynefin framework relaxes three core assumptions that conventionally apply to policy-making models - namely: order, rational choice and intentional capability*” (O’Neill, 2004, p. 150). In short, we need to move from “best” and “good” practices suitable for a simple or complicated environment to more emergent and novel practices relevant for or complex or chaotic world. Thus, management approaches are increasingly subject to doubts and mistrusts in their ability to provide relevant guidelines to cope with the perceived increased uncertainty and complexity of our World (Hock, 1995). Facing increasing uncertainty and complexity and related change and diversity (Jackson, 2003, p. xiii), managers are looking for way of finding certainty through information supporting choice and decision-making, sustained by ex-ante rationalization, which is usually some kind of cause-effect relationships leading to best possible solution, stability, predictability and control of the “future” (Gomez, 2006; Stacey, 2010). In order to do so, they turn themselves, in Jackson’s words (Jackson, 2003, p. xiv), to the plethora of “*prescriptive panaceas*” and “*management fads*” expected to bring simple solutions through best or good practices, normative approaches and standards (Kurtz & Snowden, 2003). However, these solutions do not work. They are not holistic enough, and addressing only one part of a system (e.g. an organization) instead of the whole, they miss the interactions and interdependencies with other parts, and thus lead to “*suboptimization*” (Jackson, 2003, p. xiv). Further, as demonstrated by Stacey (2010, p. 13), there is a “*lack of evidence base for prescriptions of the dominant discourse*”. Classical cause-effects investigations and researches are not very helpful to this regards, and once again, we can put forward trivial explanations:

- The difficulty of providing traditional scientific evidence (generalizable knowledge about causal relationships) in an uncertain and complex world (Stacey, 2010, p. 17);
- The above, because of the problem of demonstrating causal relationship “*if x... then y*” (not statistical correlations or associations), with regards to the non-repetitiveness of events in non-linear uncertain and complex set of relationships between variables or factors, by contrast with linear relationships, where causalities are certain, leading to define and produce optimal state (efficiency), rational decision-making (autonomous choice and rational selected goals based on calculation), and formative (revealing and realizing a mature form already given) (Stacey, 2010, p. 48).

Hence, with the dominant evidence-based management (Rousseau, 2006) fad and despite its well-known onto-epistemological fault line (Eikeland, 2008, p. 25) "*managers are called upon acting on facts rather than on beliefs, personal experience, and politicking, and to continually test, probe, and experiment with their approaches to the organization*" (Stacey, 2010, p. 15). With regards to the focus of this paper conversing about what a good PM "*is*" and therefore, what a good PM "*does*", Stacey (2010, p. 17—18) gives some examples of various studies about particular management techniques (e.g. Total Quality Management, Business Process Re-engineering) showing "*discrepancies between the discourse of these systems and the reliability of their practice*" (p. 18). Where to go from there? Leading thinkers such as Jackson and Stacey suggest holistic approaches based on systems thinking and creative holism through Total Systems Intervention and Critical Systems Practice (Jackson, 2003), and on Complex Responsive Processes perspective (Stacey, 2010) along with the related tools and techniques (Stacey, 2012).

On the theoretical side, Hodgson (2002) and Cicmil & Hodgson (2006) have discussed how standards, best practices and other bodies of knowledge governed by a tradition of natural science, narrow the role of the *project manager* class making them "*implementers*" and "*marginalising their wider potential role as competent social and political actors in complex project-labelled arrangements*" (Cicmil & Hodgson, 2006, p. 11). They emphasize the fact that classification (e.g. the "PMP" class) (Hacking, 2002b, p. 7) and names (e.g. agreed terminology and meaning) (Hacking, 2002b, p. 9) contribute to reinforce the general idea that "*managers face an objective reality which they can control by applying suitable methods for a rational assessment of the problematic situation in order to come up with the correct solution*" (Cicmil & Hodgson, 2006, p. 12). Hodgson & Cicmil (2007) demonstrate how the reification of these organizational objects leads to their naturalization, excluding alternative representations or classifications, and provide to this a rationalistic basis for "*epistemic communities*" (Hodgson & Cicmil, 2007, p. 435) and control (and the so-called "*professionalization*") of the "*discipline*" (Hodgson, 2002). The authors argue rightly "*that the establishment of universal knowledge of this kind implies a loss of a reflexive and embodied rationality in favour of abstract principles and blind faith in universal techniques*" (Townley, 2002). Bowker and Star (1999, p. 319) argue that classification "*tie(s) a person into an infrastructure – into a set of work practices, beliefs, narratives, and organizational routines*" (Hodgson & Cicmil, 2007, p. 445). Alvesson & Spicer (2012) make clear that this normalization of knowledge leads people to refrain from using their cognitive and reflexive capacity, leading to "*functional stupidity*" (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012, p. 1198).

These few developments illustrate an important phenomenon: the dissatisfaction in face of problems, antinomies, perplexities and contradictions. "*We feel we have overcome our ancestors, when in fact we are reworking the very sources of their dissatisfaction in new ways.*" (Hacking, 2002b, p. 2). Aristotle says that right method in philosophy begin by noticing contradictions in popular belief, or conflict between general opinion and the beliefs of the wise. In order to come back to the empirical dynamic of facts, various authors in project management suggest a shift to a post-modern stance

considering *what people do* in project context and situations (e.g. see critical studies (Hodgson, 2002; Cicmil & Hodgson, 2006; Hodgson & Cicmil, 2007; Cicmil et al., 2009), practice-turn (Blomquist et al., 2010; Hällgren & Lindahl, 2012), phronetic approach (Flyvbjerg et al., 2003; Flyvbjerg et al., 2012), new institutional theories and conventions theory (Bredillet, 2003)). One commonality amongst these approaches is the focus on the “*practice*” (“*do*”) and the recognition of the role of power, actors' positions, values and agendas in the construction and use of knowledge.

We face therefore this paradoxical situation of having

- on the one hand classifications of phenomena governed by a tradition of "natural sciences", rationality, universality, objective reality and value-free decision making (e.g. Cicmil & Hodgson, 2006, p.11) exemplified by the development of 'Standards' and 'Bodies of Knowledge' and;
- on the other hand "*the organizational reality, which is often messy, ambiguous, fragmented and political in character*" (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, p. 60) leading to the quest of *Verstehen*.

## **Post-modern “practice turn”**

### **Revisiting the modernist assumptions**

If we want to make sense of this debate, we need to go behind the surface of the opinions, and revisit the very assumptions on which the normative perspective is grounded.

#### Uncertainty

The future is unknown and actions, taking place overtime, are fundamentally subject to *uncertainty*, i.e. indeterminacy of information and lack of knowledge about the future events or states (Von Mises, 1949). This fundamental aspect requests some development as it is the cornerstone of the reasoning and of the conversation. In relation to future, deliberation (judgment and decision-making) and inherent uncertainty, Aristotle noted, “*But we only deliberate about things which seem to admit of issuing in two ways; as for those things which cannot in the past, present, or future be otherwise, no one deliberates about them, if he supposes that they are such; for nothing would be gained by it*” (Aristotle, 1926b, 1357a). Kraaijenbrink (2010, p. 2) calls for giving uncertainty a more explicit place in management theorizing and research.

On a neoclassical economics standpoint, the assumption made by the standard model is that the rules of the game are stable: decision made on the basis of calculation (utility) supported by information today will still make sense in the future. Thus two kinds of information must be reliable: the information about the future state of the rules of the game, and the information about the decision to be made. However, as stated by Knight (1921), the future is unknown, and therefore, in this context of

*fundamental uncertainty* (Dequech, 2011) information transfer is not sufficient to ensure coordination between agents. Under conditions of fundamental uncertainty, self-interested agents cannot act rationally, according to neoclassical economics, i.e. cannot calculate *ex ante* as they lack of stable information and means of evaluation. The ways of coping with uncertainty in management actions and decision making has been widely discussed and lead to define uncertainty in many ways. Many authors refer to Knight (1921) (external environment, asymmetric information and related market perspective) (on Knight see: LeRoy & Singell, 1987; Runde, 1998; Jarvis, 2010) and to Keynes (known unknowns: "...there is no scientific basis on which to form any calculable probability whatever. We simply do not know." (Keynes, 1937, pp. 113–114) (on Keynes see: Davidson, 1995, Dow, 1995).

If we take an organization theory standpoint, the organizing context, described as "*Chaordic*" (Hock, 1995), shows increasing volatility, uncertainty, ambiguity and complexity affecting organizations and the socio-economic environment within which they operate. Two main dimensions are considered having a key impact in organizational studies and organizing: uncertainty, and its two dimensions: volatility and ambiguity, and complexity. Because action (e.g. the making of organizing via maturity models takes place over time), and because the future is unknowable, action is inherently uncertain (Aristotle, 1926a, 1357a). Acts involve time, irreversibility, indeterminacy and contingency, uncertainty and therefore risk. Volatility, as rate and unpredictability of change in an environment over time which create uncertainty about future conditions, and ambiguity, as degree of uncertainty inherent in perceptions of the environmental state irrespective of its change over time, are therefore two dimensions of uncertainty (Carlson et al., 2006, p. 1059). Stacey (2010, p. 53) makes clear that the reality of uncertainty is linked to the complexity aspect of organizational reality and the interdependence of agents (people, organizations) and of their actions. "*Is the future given, or is it in perpetual construction?*" (Prigogine, 1997). If management practices and models rely on the causalities of certainty, their ability to address the complex and uncertain world seems to be questionable, under the organizational theory lens.

### Interpretation of information

The inherent uncertainty, about information and lack of knowledge about future events or states, challenges the neoclassical economics assumptions of *information transparency*. Agents need to interpret (coding / decoding) the information in order to make sense of it, and information is not a kind of "pure" flow. Thus, agents' actions cannot be, as states neoclassical economics theory, only the product of rational calculation, where the information is fully accessible and transparent (Gomez, 2006, p. 220).

### Interdependency and cooperation

Considering the conditions of fundamental uncertainty and the resulting necessary information interpretation, rather than transparent information, leads to raise the questions of consensus, the

problem of double contingency, and the challenge of cooperation. Contrasting the neoclassical approach, the assumption of pre-existing norms binding the decisions and actions of the agents cannot be held relevant in a context of perpetual movement and transformation. Hence, “*consensus is but one possibility for interaction*” (Hernes & Bakken, 2003, p. 1518). Social systems evolution is in essence transformative and not deterministic (Stacey, 2010). Thus, “*contingency lies in the interaction rather than at the abstracted level of norms and, as such, it sets the stage for the emergence of the social system. Social order should not be explained transcendentally, but as a circular movement that has neither beginning nor end (Luhmann & Schorr 1990).*” (Hernes & Bakken, 2003, p. 1518). For Luhmann’s (1996) norms develop over time, not in an evolutionary “*natural and inescapable*” way (Hernes & Bakken, 2003, p. 1518), but in a transformative way (Stacey, 2010, p. 58). Thus, according to Luhmannian perspective and complex systems perspective:

*“a cooling of the assumption of the importance of common norms may well help us better understand how cooperation forms in less institutionalized organizations such as virtual and temporary organizations, where the assumption about the prevalence of norms particular to the organization in question is less applicable.”* (Hernes & Bakken, 2003, p. 1518)

The inherent interpretation of information and the fact consensus and cooperation are not the stable and deterministic result of a double contingency coming from some transcendental norms and values but rather the transformative fruit of interactions within social systems have a major implication in the way we should consider the design, the role(s) and relevance of management practices and models. Despite the inherent complexity of organizational phenomena and uncertainty about the future, agents make choice and act, which involves the existence of some mechanisms enabling to cope with uncertainty and make decisions. How would agents be able to act in the absence of structure for calculating the likely outcomes of the actions lead? (Gomez & Jones, 2000, p. 696). Our point is that conventions, as defined below close the gap between “*free will* [of calculating individuals seen under the lens of neoclassical economics] *and social context* [social determinism under the structuralist lens] *interact to produce both structure and action*” (Gomez & Jones, 2000, p. 696, p. 706, [our addition]).

Thus, by not limiting the analysis of management practices and models to neoclassical economics and to organizational equilibrium-based and process-based theories, we wish to open up for alternative explanations of how agents with divergent values and orders of worth achieve cooperation, coordination and regulation, the overarching purpose of management practices and models. “*The idea that common norms are not a sine qua non for social action enables a broader repertoire of organizational forms to enter into the analysis*” (Hernes & Bakken, 2003, p. 1518). The alternative explanations we suggest build on a holistic recursivity-based approach (Hernes & Bakken, 2003, p. 1524) including aspects such as self-reference, self-producing systems (Luhmann, 1992, p. 1422, Hernes & Bakken, 2003, p. 1513; Seidl, 2007, p. 202; Stacey, 2010, p. 204; Stacey, 2012, p. 9

## Verstehen

Kraaijenbrink (2010, p. 2) states "*Management though is rarely like that [certainty with managers as theory-applying rational decision-makers] and managers only really matter when there is uncertainty*" (Kraaijenbrink, 2010, p. 2). The conclusion is that rationalist or positivist classical theories aiming at predicting and explaining management practice are only partly useful. Soft problem situations, and even the hardest of problems novelty have their soft spots, involve interweaving understanding and acting (Soros, 1987, p. 42—43; Tsoukas & Papoulias, 1996, p. 74—75, see similarly Lalonde et al, 2012, p; 426 "*even 'cold hard facts' may therefore be thought of as having a degree of 'plasticity'*"). "*The result is that the stable regularities requisite for employing the scientific method reliably can be obtained only tentatively*" (Sayer, 1984).

By contrast, to the pseudo-quantitative or mathematical methods, which distort and oversimplify, human action is accomplished by the use of *Verstehen* "*the intuitive quickness of enlightened understanding*". (Schütz, 1964, p. 4). This can be related to the notion of relevance by feasibility (Le Moigne, 2007, p. 117), and Ingenium "*an 'intelligent' action, 'ingenium,' the mental faculty which makes possible to connect in a fast, suitable and happy way the separate things*" as stated by Le Moigne (1995, 2007, p. 118), quoting Vico (1708).

Additionally, the Aristotelian teleological understanding of the world implies to consider individuals and objects according to the purposes they have and the role they have to play. (MacIntyre, 1985, p. 57—59; Tsoukas & Cummings, 1997, p. 669—670). Lalonde et al. (2012) explain that the creativity in the management of projects stem from the unstable balance between the real and the preferable, between the physical world and the world of intentionality and preference. (Lalonde et al., 2012, p. 428). As Perminova et al. (2008) rightly state: "*the way uncertainty is perceived by project managers depends on personal skills, intuition and judgment.*" ... "*Managers' attitudes and understanding of uncertainty do not create or eliminate it*" (Perminova et al., 2008, p. 77). Judging the contextual uncertainty is a goal-oriented and reflective intuitive process and not a rational one in a 'controlled environment'. A consequence of the teleological understanding is that there are no abstract or ahistorical individuals, but persons defined by and interacting with historical, social, and cultural contexts. (MacIntyre, 1985, p. 57—59).

This shift of perspective involves moving from evaluative judgments *in abstracto* based on list of attributes, to factual statements *in concreto* based on what is done in a particular situation and context. Borrowing to Tsoukas & Cummings (1997), answering to the question "What is a *good* captain" is not about providing a list of attributes "*good* captains" share, but to highlight what those recognised as *good* captains *do*. (Tsoukas & Cummings, 1997, p. 670). In the project management context, we can illustrate this by the difference between projects managers recognized as being *good* professionals, because they own a credential supported by knowledge-based standards and list of related attributes

such as years of experience, or by the recognition of the demonstrable evidence-based performance in what they *do* (performance-based standards).

Consequently, far seeing in the uncertainty inherent to action being a tyranny of the particular, of the local, and of the timely to be escaped (Toulmin 1990, p. 30–35), we rather see a place for emancipation (Habermas, 1973; Gadamer, 1975) and freedom enabling to deliberate in a “*prudent*” manner (Phrónêsis) and to act to create ‘a’ desirable future. Commenting on the ancient Greek conception of politics, Castoriadis (1991) clarifies thus:

*"If the human world were fully ordered, either externally or through its own "spontaneous operation", if human laws were given by God or by nature or by the "nature of society" or by the "laws of history", then there would be no room for political thinking and no sense in asking what the proper law is or what justice is. [...] If a full and certain knowledge (epistêmê) of the human domain were possible, politics would immediately come to an end [...]"* (Castoriadis (1991, p. 104).

Thus *"in the social domain in general, and in organizations in particular, uncertainty, ambiguity and politics must go together"*. (Tsoukas & Cummings, 1997, p. 671). Stark (2000, p. 4) proposes that *"entrepreneurship is the ability to keep multiple orders of worth in play and to exploit the resulting ambiguity"*. In project situations, Lalonde et al. (2012) recognize that *"the relationships established between the actors' cognitive schemas and perceptions of the situation, is an uncertain state of affairs. The actors do not deal with clear-cut situations. Indeed, projects by their very nature tend to expand."* (Lalonde et al., 2012, p. 425).

However, the shift of perspective, from standard to *Verstehen*, is not *per se* sufficient to fully grasp what a good PM does, as it leaves us with a fundamental dichotomy: theory vs. practice or general vs. specific. At the heart of the modern and post-modern dichotomous thinking is the question of classifications. As Hacking (2002b) offers, and this view is fully embedded in the holistic recursivity-based approach (Hernes & Bakken, 2003, p. 1524) above-mentioned:

*"The human and the social science do not differ from natural ones primarily because they deal in what are called social constructions, or because they require 'Verstehen' rather than explanation, prediction and control. They differ because there is a dynamical interaction between the classifications developed in the social science, and the individuals or behaviour classified."* (Hacking, 2002b, p. 10).

### **Pre-modern: return to praxis**

Moving beyond this dichotomous thinking involves shifting our focus from Philosophy of Science to Philosophy of Practice and toward a reconceptualization or rediscovery of the concept of “*do*”. As noticed above, paradoxically and interestingly, in their quest for the so-called post-modernism, many

authors build on “*pre-modern*” philosophies such as the Aristotelian one (e.g. MacIntyre, 1985; Tsoukas & Cummings, 1997; Flyvbjerg, 2001; Blomquist et al, 2010; Lalonde et al., 2012). “*Revisiting the past, creating the future*” have been advocated by Söderlund & Geraldi (2012, p. 559) in their guest editorial of a Special Issue of the International Journal of Managing Projects in Business.

In the following conversation, we suggest a return to Aristotle in order to address the question “what is a good PM?” i.e. “what does a good PM do?” As shown above, being a good PM is not about doing “more of the same” (Bredillet, 2003; Hodgson, 2002; Hodgson & Cicmil, 2007) but involves *verstehen* (Schütz, 1964). But the post-modern “practice world” is not enough to move beyond the dichotomous thinking abovementioned. We suggest reconceptualizing and/or rediscovering the “do” through a praxeological style of reasoning. “*Do*” is redefined to encompass both ways of knowing AND acting (the related experience and “practice”), and knowledge forms, thus a general theory of “*do*” is outlined with its implication with regards to eudaimonia (well-being, human good), praxis and Phronêsis, as well as ethics and politics.

### **Dichotomous thinking**

With regards to the conceptualization of the “*do*”, we discuss here three important dichotomies, resulting from classifications in use in social science and related theories, source of limitations both in our knowing and in our acting: 1) Theory vs. Practice, 2) Practice vs. Phronetic turn and 3) “Scholars” vs. “Practitioners, natives of situations”.

#### Theory vs. Practice

On the one hand, although there is little agreement about a definition of what a *theory* is (Gioia & Pitre, 1990, p. 587; Sutton & Staw, 1995, p. 372; Corley & Gioia, 2011, p. 12), we can use a general definition, for instance: Theory is “*an ordered set of assertions about a generic behaviour or structure assumed to hold throughout a significantly broad range of specific instances*” (Sutherland, 1975, p. 9; Boxenbaum & Rouleau, 2011, p. 274). On the other hand, the contemporary thinkers have commented the concept of “*praxis*” and raised the risk of losing an intimate understanding leading to some dilution of its basic meaning into “activity”. “*All praxis is an activity, but not all activity is praxis*” (Vazquez, 1977, p. 149). Activity includes lively action or movement, any specific deed, pursuit, the state or quality of being active. Warry (1992) observes that the term *praxis* is used as a synonym for *practice*. Furthermore, “*the analytic impoverishment of praxis signals a larger problem within anthropology: the division between theory and application*” (Warry, 1992, p. 155). We must return to the roots of the concept and explicit it. Vazquez (1977) offers a clear and simple definition of the term when he wrote “*Praxis ... is the central category of the philosophy which is not merely an interpretation of the world, but is also a guide to its transformation ...*” (Vazquez, 1977, p. 149). Praxis is a particular form of activity, a reflexive activity underlying a rational action. It is concerned with change, is present and future oriented, requires anticipation of the effect of action, rather than the interpretation of past or



prior event (Vazquez, 1977, p. 169; Warry, 1992, p. 156). Praxis is “a specific form of activity based on knowledge informed by theory and performed according to certain ethical and moral principles for political ends” (Warry, 1992, p. 157). Praxis offers an important focus for practitioners and researchers in social science, one in which theory is integrated with practice at the point of intervention. Praxis, as a particular form of activity, can serve as a focal point through which the discursive testing of theory is grounded through decision making and experience (Habermas, 1973, p. 20). Simply stated, praxis can serve as a common ground for those interested in basic and applied research by providing knowledge of the reality in which action, informed by theory, takes place (Warry, 1992, p. 156).

However, these definitions do not pay a full tribute to the richness of meanings and nuances embedded in the Aristotelian gnoseology. Eikeland (2007, 2008, 2012) and Eikeland & Nicolini (2011) aptly discuss Aristotle “*gnoseology*” (Eikeland, 2007) and emphasize that the limitations of the modern and post-modern appropriation of Aristotle philosophy<sup>5</sup>, especially with regards to the lack of understanding of nuances between the various concepts (virtues, ways of knowing and knowledge forms) and the willingness to categorize these concepts as being independent and therefore miss a fundamental point: for Aristotle, and for the move beyond dichotomous thinking, here theory vs. practice, “*Theôria was not just speculation and calculation from a separate and insulated observatory*”. While meaning “*something like studying for the purpose of understanding and truth, without intervening, and without the study being subordinated to or serving to promote any immediate plans for specific actions of any kind, [...] acquired, practical, participant experience (Empeiría) was necessary*” (Eikeland, 2008, p. 46—47).

Drawing on Eikeland (2007; 2012) we can summarize some key aspects of Aristotle gnoseology.

#### Relational ways of knowing

Aristotle’s thinking about knowledge is fundamentally and explicitly relational. The knower and the known always relate to each other in a specific way. Relationships between means and ends are also specific to the different ways of knowing. The ethico-political consequences of the different ways of knowing are also explicitly considered.

#### Two forms of “theory” and epistêmê

“...*epistêmê, that is, for knowledge that was stabilised and pretty secure, about subjects that were for the most part or always stable and regular themselves*” (Eikeland, 2007, p. 350).

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See Eikeland, 2007, p. 347. And e.g. “*Scientific methods are usually specialised techniques quite different from and extraneous to the ways of producing knowledge prevalent in our everyday lives. This goes even for the “post-modernist”, relativist, and constructivist alternatives gradually becoming mainstream, which often seem to move to the opposite extreme of making all forms of knowledge epistemologically equivalent. But these modernist, or post-modernist, ways of thinking are insufficient for understanding both knowledge and ethics.*” (Eikeland, 2007, p. 348)

The first form, called *epistêmê*<sub>1</sub> or *theôria*, where like in grammar there is no physical distance between the knower and the known. “This means that the subjects studied – our own forms of practice – must be “reified” reflectively in order to be grasped, since they are not really outside us or outside our practices at all” (Eikeland, 2007, p. 351; Eikeland, 2012, p. 24). Furthermore, “*Theôria... is about proceeding from within an activity, making its “grammar” explicit, opening new possibilities for action, and informing mindful, caring, and wise conduct. ... When conceived and formulated after a grammatical model, theory as “Theôria” thus becomes a resource to be used in action and for action to produce emancipatory visibilisation and expansive articulation*” (Eikeland & Nicolini, 2011, p. 169).

The second form, called *theôrêsis* or *epistêmê*<sub>2</sub> is “based on observation at a distance. *Theôrêsis* relates to external objects without intervening. The relation implied between the knower and the known, is difference, distance, separation, non-interaction, and non-interference (ex. astronomy)” (Eikeland, 2007, p. 349; Eikeland, 2012, p. 21).

#### Forms of “practice”

“For Aristotle, *praxis* knowledge represents a relationship between colleagues sharing common standards for how to go about their professional activities” (Eikeland, 2007, p. 351; Eikeland, 2012, p. 26).

*Praxis*<sub>1</sub>, dialogue & dialectics: “the way of learning or research, moving “up” from how things appear to us phenomenologically to an articulated insight in basic principles ... searching patterns, similarities and differences in our accumulated practical experience...” (Eikeland, 2007, p. 352; Eikeland, 2012, p. 27). However, “critical dialogue needs relief from immediate pressure to act” (Eikeland, 2012, p. 29), and “a permanent *skholê* (leisure - open, free space - school) embedded in practical settings is needed, making it possible to develop, unfold, and articulate the “grammars” of different social settings” (Eikeland, 2006, p. 18).

*Praxis*<sub>2</sub>, *phrônêsis*: “the way down from “theory” to “practice” ... the practical enactment is often immediate and spontaneous ... but in other fields where the practice is not equally standardised and “automated”, for example in ethics, the “application” of general competence or of the knowledge of principles provided by ethical virtues like justice, courage, friendliness, honesty, etc., needs deliberation or *phrônêsis*, trying to find out how to act in the most just or fair way towards someone right here and now. The point is that the way from theory to practice within this kind of knowledge is not deductive, nor does it go by some form of technical calculation of effects. And it was never intended to be deductive or calculative by Aristotle” (Eikeland, 2007, p. 352; Eikeland, 2012, p. 31; text emphasized by us).

The other forms (*pathos*, *khôrêsis*, *poîêsis*) are included in the following overview (**Table 1**).

Moving away from any dichotomous thinking, we can tentatively summarize the interdependence between theory, practice: knowledge “embedded” in practice and experience (ways of knowing) – whatever it is tacit (Polanyi, 1962, 1966), implicit (Nonaka, 1994) or explicit knowledge (Gourlay, 2006) – is transformed and translated into, and is recursively and reflexively informed and transformed by, theory.

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Table 1 about here  
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### The “practice turn” is not enough

A vast amount of literature (e.g. Bourdieu, 1990; de Certeau, 1984; Foucault, 1977; Giddens, 1979) has been published since the early 1980s dealing with practice in social theory (Schatzki et al., 2001; Reckwitz, 2002), e.g. strategy-as-practice (for an overview, see Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Carter et al., 2008; Rasche & Chia, 2009; Vaara & Whittington, 2012). These works aim at overcoming the dualism between 'individualism' and 'societism' (Schatzki, 2005). *“Practice theorist aim to respect both the efforts of individual actors and the workings of the social”* (Whittington, 2006, p. 614). The three core themes for practice theory (practices, praxis and practitioners)<sup>6</sup> are forming interrelated parts of a whole (Giddens, 1984). In the project management context, the practice turn, strongly inspired by the strategy as practice stream, has gained momentum (e.g. Bredillet, 2004; Bechky, 2006; Cicmil, 2006; Cicmil et al., 2006; Hällgren & Wilson, 2008; Blomquist et al., 2010; Hällgren & Söderholm, 2011; Sanderson, 2012). Vaara & Whittington (2012) make clear that the *practice turn* “defines itself in opposition to methodological individualism”, how “*praxis relies on practices*”, and “*how social structures and human agency link together in the explanation of action*” (Vaara & Whittington, 2012, p. 288).

Brown (2012, p. 446—447) explores similarities and differences between practice (i.e. Vaara & Whittington, 2012) and phronetic turns (i.e. Flyvbjerg, 2004), summarized in Table 2. As he specifies, “*no attempt at reconciliation will be made – any such attempt could only succeed by introducing unproductive distortions*” (Brown, 2012, p. 441). While Brown analysis is very relevant and relies on an Aristotelian *Phrónêsis*, it seems he misses one key point raised by Eikeland (2008): the phronetic turn can be barely said “Aristotelian” or rooted in a relevant interpretation of *Phrónêsis* for one major reason: the “expert” or “phronetic researcher” remains an outsider to the “practice” and this is in contradiction with Aristotelian thought (for a full critique of phronetic social science, and aspects linked to misconception of epistêmê, value –rationality, see Eikeland, 2008, pp. 43—44 and note 28).

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<sup>6</sup> These concepts are usually defined as follow: praxis (Project Management-as-Praxis, activity involved in project making), practices (various tools, norms, and procedures of project work), and practitioners (actors involved in, or seeking to influence, project making).

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Table 2 about here  
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Therefore the practice lens offers a contrasted classification of perspectives with regards to practice (acting) and knowledge & competence development and their mutual relation:

- the “practice turn” can be seen as still rooted in a kind of “social scientific” spirit – attempting to balance rigor and relevance – with a general focus on “*knowledge and inquiry ‘for’ and ‘about’ and even ‘in’ practice*” (Kondrat, 1992, p. 238),
- while the phronetic proposal suggests moving from a “turn” to a “revolution”, a “practice revolution” with an impact on society – focusing on relevance, and that “*our knowing is ‘in’ our action*” (Schön, 1983, p. 49). Maturana & Varela (1998, p. 27—29) similarly define knowing as “*effective action*”, and write that “*all doing is knowing, and all knowing is doing.*” In Practice theory words, Giddens (1984, p. 4) explicates knowledgeability as “*inherent within the ability to ‘go on’ within the routines of social life*”.

We argue that, in the context of temporary-based organizations and inherent fundamental uncertainty, the “practice” world is not enough to fully capture the mutual relationships between practice (ways of knowing) and theory for the following reasons:

1. It doesn’t address well the temporary-based organizing phenomena;
2. It is anchored in a dichotomous thinking about scholars vs. practitioners (the knowers and the knows), and practice vs. theory;
3. Given the dichotomous thinking, it doesn’t fully clarify the problem of conceptualizing “universals” or “general theory”.

Coming back to Packendorff (1995, p. 327) definition of temporary organizations (see note 3), we can state that the non-routine process and product involving explicit knowledge (proposition 1) is not the primary focus of practice turn advocating “habitus” and routines anchored in the tacit, and sometimes implicit, dimension of knowledge<sup>7</sup>. Furthermore the conscious organizing efforts (i.e. not spontaneous self-organizing) (proposition 4) in a pluralistic context principle is in contradiction with the practice turn concept of unconscious behaviour and ideas such as pure spontaneous emergence of organizing phenomena. However, considering the Aristotelian relational ways of knowing in relation to what we could name its recursive and reflexive lens (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012, p. 1198), and the concept of self-reference (Luhmann, 1992, p. 1421; Hernes & Bakken, 2003, p. 1513) we can contend

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<sup>7</sup> While addressing the knowledge embedded in practice, I refer to Polanyi (1962, 1966) notion of tacit knowledge, by contrast to Nonaka (1994) notion, emphasizing more the “implicit” dimension in articulation with the explicit dimension of knowledge. (Gourlay, 2006). Tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1962, 1966) is contextual, personal, and practice-based. It cannot be made explicit. Implicit knowledge and explicit knowledge can be converted back and forth according to Nonaka’s SECI cycle (1994).

that “*the individual independence is embodied in collective dependence*” (Gomez, 2006, p. 222) leading us to cool down this proposition.

The time limitation of the temporary organization (proposition 3) and the performance evaluation (proposition 3) aspects involve the recognition of making means and ends explicit and collective deliberation and dialogue about them including facts and values that is the recognition of some degree of rationalization of everyday practice and experience with the support of analytic and epistemic effort (“*epistemic impulses*”) (Eikeland, 2008, p. 23, p. 46). With regards to practice and theory, the empirical observation suggested by both the practice and phronetic proposals, while claiming rejecting any dualism (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011, p. 1241—1243), do not pay full tribute to the necessary acquired practical experience as way of knowing involving being native of situations and actions (Eikeland, 2008, p. 35) and not just an “empirical observer” or “engaged scholar” (Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006). As Eikeland (2008) poses, “*knowledge and competence is increasingly developed from within practical contexts...*” (p. 21). Based on accurate reading of Aristotle, Lalonde et al. (2012) aptly address this point: “*This work [An empirical investigation of the project situation: PM practice as an inquiry process] should be considered, among others (e.g., Bourgault & Lagacé, 2002; Bourgault et al., 2006), as a vehicle for experiential or in-action teaching styles.*” (p. 429, [text added]).

#### And then comes the “reflexive praxitioner”

The assumptions about the “*divisions of labour between the researchers and the researched*” (p. Eikeland & Nicolini, 2011, p. 167), the roles, behaviours and expectations of the agents or actors, as framed by the classical classes' dichotomy between scholars and practitioners (Aram & Salipante, 2003, p. 1900; Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006, p. 806), involved in knowledge creation and transfer is at the centre of the theory vs. practice and relevance vs. rigour debate. Some authors have pleaded for some kind of junction or integration between the “scholars—experts— researchers” and the “managers/workers—practitioners—participants” (e.g. reclaiming the practical (Kondrat, 1992, p. 241); social science practitioner (Warry, 1992, p. 160); engaged scholars (Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006, p. 803; Objectivism style of reasoning (Pouliot, 2007, p. 360), tipping point (Rynes et al., 2001, p. 1051), practitioners in the context of project-as-practice (Blomquist et al., 2010, p. 13); practitioner-researcher (Jarvis, 1999), and researcher-practitioner (Lalonde et al. 2012, note 8, p. 429<sup>8</sup>). We suggest that there is a need to go further in-depth to fully grasp the importance of moving to consider one single class of actors in project situations. Hacking (2002b), while reflecting about classifications posits that “*The human and the social science ... differ because there is a dynamical interaction between the classifications developed in the social science, and the individuals or behaviour classified*” (Hacking,

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<sup>8</sup> Following the Aristotelian tradition, Lalonde et al. (2012) refer to the project actor ('praxitioner') as becoming a *phronimos*: “*The interest in theorizing inquiry practices is that it frees professional action from poesis and solely instrumental considerations and infuses it with praxis. That is, the project actor has the potential to become a 'phronimos', or an individual endowed with practical wisdom, with the capacity to think through increasingly complex project situations where values must be considered in light of critical issues for organizations, communities and the general public.*” (Lalonde et al., 2012, p. 430).

2002b, p. 10). He develops the idea of *interactive classifications* (Hacking, 2002b) and *looping effects* (Hacking, 1995) about “*how classifications affect us and how we create new classes anew*” (Hacking, 2002b, p. 12). As a consequence, moving from the two classes dichotomy “scholars–experts–researchers” and the “managers/workers–practitioners–participants” to one single class we name “*praXitioners*” is all but neutral, with regards to a praxeological (praxeology defined as study or science of human actions and conduct, i.e. praxis) style of reasoning (Hacking, 2002b, p. 3) and to go beyond the theory vs. practice / rigour vs. relevance gap. I maintain that this move away from the current dichotomy may contribute to create new perspectives through a new class and open up new ways of thinking and acting in project situations. The name *praXitioner* is both related to *praxis*, and to what Stacey names “*reflexive practitioner*” in contrast with the “reflective practitioner” (Schön, 1983), “*because reflexive practices involves noticing and thinking about participation with others in the accomplishment of joint tasks [...] Reflexive practice is more than reflective practice because it involves people in more than reflection together on what they are doing, and that more is inquiring into how they are thinking about what they are doing[...] Reflexivity is thinking about how we are thinking*” (Stacey, 2012, p. 112). We suggest therefore a shift from the “reflective practitioner” to the “reflexive *praXitioner*”, what Eikeland names being “*native*” (Eikeland, 2006, p. 45; 2012, p. 11).

### **Toward a liberation praxeology**

After an investigation of the modern and post-modern perspectives about practice and its relation to theory, we recognize that

- We are dissatisfied in face of the exposed problems, antinomies, perplexities and contradictions; As Hacking put it: “*We feel we have overcome our ancestors, when in fact we are reworking the very sources of their dissatisfaction in new ways.*” (Hacking, 2002b, p. 2). Aristotle says that right method in philosophy begin by noticing contradictions in popular belief, or conflict between general opinion and the beliefs of the wise;
- Practice and theory, in their relational, recursive and reflexive dimensions, should be embedded in practical contexts (Eikeland, 2008, p. 47);
- A dialogical and or dialectical mode of thought and action should be privileged for moving away any dichotomous thinking and choosing one side of the dichotomy (Eikeland, 2008, p. 48) and recognizing the whole dynamic of classification systems. Hacking (2002b, p. 4) states that the essence of a style of reasoning is classification, “*and also something need for thought itself*”. Each style of reasoning introduces new objects, new classes of objects generating new classes of entities (i.e “reflexive praxitioner”, i.e. “good” PM), and new onto-epistemological debates about their reality and the way of knowing about them. It creates its own appropriate “*very criteria of truth*” and is “*self-authenticating*” (Hacking, 2002b, p. 4).

We suggest therefore re-conceptualizing the “do”, a liberation praxeology, a praxeological style of reasoning, unequivocally rooted in Aristotle philosophy, can offer such an integrative approach, and we outline below some key tenets of this approach.

### Praxeology

Praxeology is defined as study or science of human actions and conduct, praxis and practices and, if its origin can be tracked back to Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* (1926a), the word praxeology is accredited to Louis Bourdeau in his "Théorie des sciences" (1882, last but one chapter; Ostrowski, 1967, p. 21). A presentation of the origins of Praxeology (Petruszewycz, 1965; Ostrowski, 1967), and more generally of works supported by a "praxeological intent"<sup>9</sup> (Petruszewycz, 1965, p. 13), through an anthology of historical literature shows the richness of the concept, spanning from Economics (Austrian School: Von Mises, Hayek, Penrose) to Political Science (Machiavelli, von Clausewitz, Aron), through Moral (La Fontaine, La Rochefoucauld), Philosophy (Descartes, Pascal, Leibniz), Novel (Balzac, Walder, Doyle, Poe), Social Psychology (Daval), Behaviorism (Watson), Mathematics & Probability (Pascal, Leibniz, Bernoulli), Theory of Risk & Economics (Massé), Games Theory & Economic Behavior (Guilbaud, Von Neumann), Tektology with the concept of 'conjunction' (act of joining) and dialectical materialism (Bogdanov in Petruszewycz, 1965, p. 16 and in Le Moigne, 2007, p. 118) ... and its comprehensiveness. We can mention further development in the area of Education & Learning (Pascal & Bertram, 2012), Social science (Eikeland, 2012), Strategy-as-Practice (Rasche & Chia, 2009; Touskas, 2010; Vaara & Whittington, 2012, and Project-as-Practice (Blomquist et al., 2010).

### Liberation

Gutiérrez (1988), a Peruvian theologian and Dominican priest, is regarded as the founder of Liberation Theology. Liberation theology is a school of thought that explores the relationship between Christian theology and political activism, particularly in areas of social justice, poverty, and human rights. The main methodology of liberation theology is to do theology (i.e. speak of God) from the viewpoint of the economically poor and oppressed of the human community. The concept offers, for our conversation, more than just a metaphor.

According to the Aristotelian praxeological perspective, we can put forward that the ultimate purpose of any “organization” is achieving eudaimonia (human well-being, happiness) and social good through “Ethics” (Aristotle, 1926a) and related “Politics” (Aristotle, 1944). Reasoning about temporary and project based organizing in a praxeological liberation lens is thus about knowing and acting, on the basis of Ethics and Politics, from the viewpoint of the development of well-being, happiness and social good. Furthermore, this liberation aspect is supported by the dialogical and dialectical mode of

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<sup>9</sup> One can speak of "praxeological intent" when an author is concerned by human actions in a sufficiently detached manner, either for techniques and means (technological studies), and for ends and values (moral studies) (translation by the author. See Petruszewycz, 1965, p. 13)

reasoning and action suggested above and the recognition of the dynamic and interactive relationship with any classification systems we may consider; for e.g. everyday practices and arbitrary vs. non arbitrary standards (Eikeland, 2008, p. 26), differentiating organizing episodes (Tsoukas, 2010) vs. recognizing that, in the context of temporary based organizing, these episodes being intertwined and interacting with each other, universal vs. particular, general epistemic accounts vs. narratives and/or case studies, abstract vs. concrete, deductive vs. inductive vs. abductive logic, theoretical pluralism (Eikeland, 2008, pp. 42—43).

### **Tenets of a general theory of “do”**

A broader consideration is that the way of conceptualizing “universals” or “general theory” has to be made clear. According to Eikeland (2008, pp. 25), three kind of traditions can be considered: 1) Covering laws (deductive nomological or hypothetico-deductive model), 2) Statistical generalizations and, 3) Standards. Here standards can be defined as *“fixed points or “ideals” for practitioners within certain areas, saying something about what it means to perform a certain kind of activity competently or, according to a, saying something about what it means to perform a certain kind of activity competently or, according to certain quality.”* (p. 26). The meaning doesn’t include standards understood as just average norms, arbitrary or imposed by external bodies (e.g Brunsson et al, 2000). Here, such standards are neither qualitatively nor quantitatively influenced by any counter facts. Standards are made by the success of virtuoso performers, and they *“change when someone finds a better way of doing, making or using something”*. The key characteristics of such standards are that *“not everybody should or could realize them equally or fully [...] their non-arbitrary character, their immanence as patterns to practice, and “ways-of-doing-things”, and their practical inevitability in human life as either implicit or explicit, vague or more exact standards of measurement, as standards of validity of excellence”* (p. 26). Contrary to arbitrary standards, which can be conventional, unnecessary, or enforced, non-arbitrary standards are necessary as they express an existential necessity that is what it means to be or to do something. Such standards are to be observed practically from within the practice and they are impossible to be observed just from outside, by perception. The position of the “observer” is thus quite different between these three traditions. In the case of “standards”, the observer is the practitioner, the native, dealing with things and theorizing his/her own practice, and there is no dichotomy between practice and theory (Eikeland, 2008, p. 27).

### **Reconceptualising the “do”: eudaimonia, praxis and Phrónêsis**

#### The mediating role of praxis and Phrónêsis

At the heart of praxeology is the mediating role of praxis (as a way of knowing activity including a commitment to eudaimonia) and phrónêsis (as a knowledge form). For Aristotle (1926), the possession of three intellectual virtues (tékhne (artistic or technical knowledge, craft), epistêmê (as theoretike) (“theoretical” knowledge) and Phrónêsis (practical wisdom, prudence, but includes both



intellectual excellence AND excellence of character), along with the possession of ethical virtues, enable an individual to achieve eudaimonia (well-being, happiness). Eudaimonia actually requires activity, action, exhibiting virtue (good character), and excellence in reason (rational activity). Phrónêsis, as knowledge form, is developed through a specific type of empeiria (practical acquired experience), a “way of knowing as activity” named praxis (Eikeland, 2008, p. 526).

We can now see the full quality of praxis. It is not simply action based on reflection. It is action which embodies certain qualities. These include a commitment to eudaimonia (well-being, happiness) and the search for truth, and respect for others. It is the action of people who are free, who are able to act for themselves. Moreover, praxis is always risky. It requires that a person “*makes a wise and prudent practical judgement about how to act in this situation*” (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 190 quoted in Smith, 1999, 2011). Praxis as such aims at the liberation of individuals or communities from the alienating aspects of everyday practice subject to the hegemony of the rationalist forces constraining every day actions or activities. (Warry, 1992, p. 157; Frankenberg, 1988, p. 326—327). As Warry (1992, p. 157) puts it:

*“Praxis research requires the development of non-alienating methodologies that are dialogic and participatory in nature. [...]. Praxis, then, is not simply activity, but a specific form of activity: activity based on knowledge informed by theory and performed according to ethical and moral principles for political ends. Habermas and Gadamer both point to “emancipatory praxis”, which appeals to communicative practice aimed at overcoming incommensurable beliefs. Emancipatory praxis is a specific type of moral and political activity aimed at the liberation of individuals or communities from alienating aspects of everyday practices.”*

With regards to knowledge, competence and ways of knowing as activities (i.e. practice), Eikeland (2008) explains that “*knowledge and competence is increasingly developed from within practical contexts...making organisational learning in work places and all cooperative endeavours – i.e. collective efforts, experiential learning and improvement – increasingly important in general*” (pp. 21—22). This relation between knowing and practicing is also acknowledged by Weisinger & Salipante (2000): “*The knowing is bound with the practicing of seemingly mundane actions ... knowing as situated learning and practicing*” (p. 387). The logic of “Knowing-in-Practice” is fully realized through “Knowing-as-Practicing” following recursive logic between “*theorizing practice and practicing theory*” and the fact that “*theorizing practice is itself a practice*” (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011, p. 1250).

For Aristotle, praxis, Phrónêsis and ethics are inseparable. The aspects of values, ethics are fully embedded in the teleological perspective. As Aristotle (1926a, 1140b 6) put it: “*while making has an end other than itself, action cannot; for good action itself is its end*”. Tsoukas & Cummings (1997) explain: “*there is an internal relationship between acting and the standards in terms of which acting is judged, which is not there when producing artifacts*.” (Tsoukas & Cummings, 1997, p. 666). For Aristotle, the central role is played by phrónêsis because, in human actions, the moral virtues and

practical knowledge go together: *"it is impossible to be practically wise without being good"* (1926a, 1144a 18). Prudence (phrónêsis, practical wisdom) involves *"knowing the right values and being able to put them into practice in concrete situations"*. (Tsoukas & Cummings, 1997, p. 666). As phrónêsis (practical wisdom, prudence) is both intellectual excellence and excellence of character, we cannot be intellectuality prudent (phronimoi) without being ethically good (Eikeland, 2008, p. 59). Phrónêsis cannot be acquired alone independently from other ethical virtues. Thus it is impossible to separate phrónêsis from other ethical virtues: *"we cannot be prudent without being good and we cannot be fully good without being prudent, taking the particulars of the situation into account"* (Eikeland, 2008, p. 64).

The focus of the particulars of the situation leads Tsoukas & Cummings (1997, p. 666) to ask the question *"Apart from being inherently value-laden, what is it about practical matters that requires human agents to have practical wisdom instead of merely scientific or craft knowledge?"* Referring to Aristotle, Nussbaum (1990, pp. 70-75) indicates three reasons: 1) practical matters change over time, and new problems call for new responses, 2) practical matters are inherently ambiguous, 3) Nussbaum (1990, p. 74) observes that *"Aristotle suggests that the concrete ethical case may simply contain some ultimately particular and non-repeatable elements"*. Kondrat (1992) further says:

*"Praxis is the form of reasoning appropriate to social, political, or other interactive contexts in which the individual, drawing on experience to provide a grasp of the immediate situation, reasons how to act prudently and correctly in a given set of circumstances. Prudence supersedes effectiveness as the relevant virtue in such cases. Indeed, the prudent person may be called on to make choices among several potentially effective (or equally ineffective) courses of action."* (Kondrat, 1992, p. 239).

Another question immediately comes to mind concerning the kind of rationality mobilized by human agents in the course of action: Are they differentiating or reconciling formal abstract rationality (Kondrat, 1992; Toulmin, 2002) from substantive rationality (Kondrat, 1992), situated reasoning, espoused theory from theory-in-use (Argyris & Schön, 1974), with regards to uncertainty about the mode of action they adopt in specific situations? Warry offers an authoritative answer with regards to the mediating role of praxis and phrónêsis (both rooted on empeiría – practical acquired experience), between past and future, between poeisis & tékhnhê and Theôría & epistêmê, as well as between two kind of activities (aesthesis - perception) and (enérgeia – perfecting actualization):

*"Gadamer's observation that understanding and interpretation must be integrated into the 'moment' of application is critical (Gadamer, 1975, p. 273—274; see also Bernstein, 1983, p. 159). Praxis, as a particular form of activity, can serve as a focal point through which the discursive testing of theory is grounded through decision making and experience (Habermas, 1973, p. 20). Simply stated, praxis can serve as a common ground for those interested in basic and applied research by providing knowledge of the reality in which action, informed by theory takes place."* (Warry, 1992, p. 156).

Thus, praxis and phrónêsis, in their mediating role serve as focal point through which dichotomies are integrated, and have been recognized as "*emancipatory*" (Habermas, 1971, p. 314; Gadamer, 1975), and offering "*a way of reflecting on disjuncture between the formal rationality and the substantive rationality*" (Kondrat, 1992, p. 253). Project management authors such as Cicmil & Hodgson (quoting Balck, 1994, p. 2 in Cicmil & Hodgson, 2006, p. 13), Blomquist et al. (2010, p. 9) and Lalonde et al. (2012, p. 428) have acknowledged a similar view. As Eikeland (2008, p. 87) puts it, "*Only in praxis, not in the study of external nature, the student and the studied, the knower and the known, coincide.*"

### Reconciling Means and Ends, Facts and Values: Ethics is Politics

An important aspect connected to the mediating role of praxis and Phrónêsis and to what Taylor (1993, p. 57) calls closing "*the pronetic gap*", is that the Aristotelian tradition enables us to specify how to "*reconnect Means and Ends, Facts and Values*" (Tsoukas & Cummings, 1997, p. 668), and to move beyond "*a dualistic way of thinking*"<sup>10</sup> (Tsoukas & Cummings, 1997, p. 668) about doing (practice) and thinking (theory, knowledge & competence development), factual statements and evaluative judgments.

We need to start from Aristotle's teleological view of the world. For him, human agents and natural things are defined for the sake of some functions or ends (purposes). From a factual statement such as "He/She (i.e. Project Manager) meets recurrently and successfully the project objectives" we can infer the evaluative judgment "s(he) is a good PM". Teleologically, classifying someone as a PM is to think about the purposes, the ends, s(he) pursues with regards to the functions or roles s(he) fulfils or the way s(he) is expected to behave, "*not conceiving [him/her] as ahistorical selves or abstract individuals*" (Tsoukas & Cummings, 1997, p. 670). Thus calling a PM "good" is to make a factual statement about what an acknowledged "good" PM does, and not referring to a list of attributes he/she should meet. A concept such as "good" is not an abstract entity or category in a classification system, but is embedded in the activity, particular context and situation (Feyerabend, 1987, p. 113). Calling a particular action "good" means what a "good" PM would (is expected) do in the situation and is therefore making a factual statement (MacIntyre, 1985, p. 59; Tsoukas & Cummings, 1997, p. 670) reconciling facts and values. A direct implication is that the development of knowledge and competence should be made through practical acquired experience (empeiria) and perfecting actualization (energeia) and not just through perception (aisthêsis), abstract, distant and external observation. We can see here the alignment with the way of conceptualizing "universals" or "general theory" as "Standards" (Eikeland, 2008, p.26).

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<sup>10</sup> "*In contrast to dualism, duality implies that we regard an entity as being both constitutive and constituting, such as takes place in the case of recursivity (Giddens, 1979)*". (Hernes & Bakken, 2003, p. 1525).

Developing “do”, i.e. practice AND knowledge and competence (theory), is done by entering the tradition of a community of practitioners<sup>11</sup> (MacIntyre, 1985; Schön, 1987; Brown & Duguid, 1991) sharing common goals, i.e. ends, will, wish, or want and opinion (Eikeland, 2008, p. 87, 121) and way of achieving them (means, but with the underlying idea of doing (praxis) and doing well (eupraxia)<sup>12</sup>. Being part of the community (i.e. Polis) doesn’t involve blind acceptance of standards, conventions, norms (nomos – laws) but at the same time the acceptance of historically developed laws and collective dialogues, debates, deliberations about them leading to possibly changing them (Solomon, 1992; Tsoukas & Cummings, 1997, p. 670; also see Castoriadis, 1991, p.104 for ancient Greek conception of politics))

Tsoukas & Cummings (1997, p. 671) rightly enhances: “...in the social domain in general, and in organizations in particular, uncertainty, ambiguity and politics must go together”. Thus, through praxis and phrónêsis, “*Ethics is politics inasmuch as the achievement of human happiness*” (Strang, 1998, p. 1).

## Concluding comments

This paper offers, first and foremost, a conversation about the concept of “do”. The background of the conversation is the Aristotelian idea that “being” good is interdependent of “doing” good, thus discoursing about the “do” is discoursing about the “be”. Furthermore, discoursing about the “do” is discoursing about the “know”... The intention of this conversation is not to offer yet another evidence-based management fad to the practitioners; neither it is our objective to identify a potential research gap in the literature for scholars. Rather, we want to open an assumption-challenging discussion with regards to main stream approaches, in what Long (2002, p.44) describes as turning “*our eyes away from the blinding light of eternal certitude towards the refracted world of turbid finitude*” (Long, 2002, p. 44), and generating what Bernstein terms as “*Cartesian Anxiety*” (Bernstein, 1983, p. 18), setting the scene for imaginative and innovative thinking (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013) and suggesting a revisited conceptualization of the “do” in management. This conversation is also about arguing that normative truth, order, values and supporting assumptions “*must always be critically engaged, for it does not lie*

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<sup>11</sup> For Aristotle, “*praxis is not only individual, however. Collective praxis is possible when we follow common standards, and adjust to each other communicatively, i.e. through establishing mutual and common understandings of how things should be done in “concord” (homónoia in EN1167a22-b16, EE1241a16—34), as e.g. in grammatical regulations of language use, or when musicians and dancers play according to a common score, or improvise, tuning in on each other knowing the basic principles of the music and the dance*” (Eikeland, 2008, p. 87).

<sup>12</sup> The distinction between ends and means in Aristotle is not an easy topic, and is linked to the four Aristotelian causes (material, formal, efficient (the near only one considered by moderns and post-moderns), and final (e.g. Mann (2009). For an in-depth discussion see e.g. Eikeland, 2008, p.194—196). Mann, Scott. (2009). Aristotle, Dialectic and Critical Realism. In E. Close, G. Couvalis, G. Frazis, M. Palaksoglou, and M. Tsianikas (eds.) “Greek Research in Australia: Proceedings of the Biennial International Conference of Greek Studies, Flinders University June 2007”, Flinders University Department of Languages - Modern Greek: Adelaide, 63-70.

*in ultimates* [or panaceas (Jackson, 2003, p. xiv)], *but rather in the give and take between actually existing beings*" (Long, 2002, p. 54).

Looking for answering the question "what is a good PM?" guides us to address the "true" question: "what does a good PM do?" Visiting the concept of "do" leads us to challenge the modern and post-modern assumptions supporting both management theory and practice and to call for a "re"turn to pre-modern Aristotelian gnoseology – a liberation praxeology – in order to bring a convincing answer in the pluralistic context of temporary-based organizing. This praxeological style of reasoning fully grasps the relational relationships between practice (acting, I can now state "acting well" and for human happiness, in Aristotelian tradition) and knowledge and competence development (theory) – all interdependent dimensions of "do" – i.e.: the mediating role of praxis and Phrónêsis in reconciling any dichotomous thinking into the "moment" of practical acquired experience (*empeiría*) and perfecting actualization (*enérgeia*) as "do" IS both ways of knowing AND knowledge forms; The reconciliation means/ends and facts/values; and the necessary dialogue and deliberation aspects as well as the clear Ethics and Politics dimensions. Additionally, this style of reasoning fully acknowledges that what has been brought from the past (Aristotle) is still actual and help to overcome current exposed problems, antinomies, perplexities and contradictions; that theory is embedded in practical contexts and experience; a dialogical and a dialectical mode of reasoning and action as encompassing duality for moving away any dichotomous thinking and dualism, and clarifying the way of conceptualizing "universals" or "general theory" that is the "standards" tradition.

A consequence is an invitation to rethink the so called "practice turn" and "phronetic revolution" as well as clarifying the assumptions underlying the various kinds of action research. Eikeland & Nicolini (2011, p. 166) suggest to pay a central attention to research triggering critical dialogue and immanent critique (*praxis 1 - praxis-theôria*), starting from a position immersed in the action concerned and broadly theoretical, i.e. directed toward gaining insights, producing understanding or explanations. These authors advocate praxis research by contrast to the current action research keeping an "outsider" or "spectator" perspective (Develop specialised techniques / applied research (*khêsis, poiêsis-tékhnê*); or Normal science (*explanatory and interpretive approaches*) (*theôrêsis*)) or when immersed in the action, focusing on applied research, change and improvement (inform deliberation (*praxis<sub>2</sub> - phrônêsis*)) rather than gaining insights, producing understanding or explanations. Another important direct consequence, resulting from Aristotle's teleological view of the world, is the reconciliation between factual and value statements: a "good" PM is a fact, acknowledging what a "good" PM does. Furthermore, in an Aristotelian perspective, being "good" means to take part of a community of practice or practitioners, in the "way-of-doing-things", and therefore taking part of the debates and deliberations about ends, means and laws having in mind the achievement of eudaimonia (human happiness) as ultimate goal. According to this perspective, ethics IS politics.

Ultimately, we do hope reading this paper will provide an opportunity for *Enérgeia* and further dialogues and deliberations.

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**Table 1: Aristotelian ways of knowing (after Eikeland, 2007, p. 348; Eikeland, 2008, p. 526; Eikeland, 2012, p. 20)**

Basis	Way of knowing	Associated rationality / Knowledge forms	English equivalent	The known (what the knowledge concerns) in relation to the knower)	"Location" for source of change known object (change principle / arkhē)	End / aim (tèlos / skopos) for knowledge form	Method / way / mean
Aísthêsis (perception)	theôrêsis = epistêmê <sub>2</sub>	Deduction, demonstration, didactics	Spectator speculation	The known as external to knower: outer object qua phenomenon = appearance	In external object / outside the knower	(a) true statements (b) explanation and prediction	Observation & "speculation" / application of / reduction to known concepts
	páthos	??	Being affected passively from the outside	Within the knower	Outside knower	"formation" as passive compliance-habitation-adjustment of emotions and passions	"Impressions" (things and relationships are imposed from without so that the pressure is felt, an impression made, and one becomes impressed or depressed)
Empeiria (practically acquired experience)	khêrêsis	Tékhnê (calculation)	Using instruments	External to knower: external object qua something used as instrument	Within the knower	"mastery" as active adjustment to external object as instrument / means without changing it	Practice / training / exercise
	poiêsis		Making, manipulating materials	External to knower: external object qua something manipulated, changes, created	Within the knower	Production or change in / of external object as material	Manipulating / influencing / intervening
	praxis <sub>2</sub>	Phrônêsis (deliberation)	Doing: virtuous performance, practical reasoning	Within the knower; choice and performance of actions in a concrete situations	Within the knower	Choice of what leads to or contain ethico-political goods / ethically virtuous deeds	Bouleusis – deliberation, concrete situational judgments, deliberate choice (prohairesis)

Basis	Way of knowing	Associated rationality / Knowledge forms	English equivalent	The known (what the knowledge concerns) in relation to the knower)	"Location" for source of change known object (change principle / arkhē)	End / aim (tèlos / skopos) for knowledge form	Method / way / mean
Enérgeia (perfecting actualization)	praxis <sub>1</sub>	Dialectics/dialogue. The way from novice to expert, from tacit to articulate	Practice, training for competence development and insight (theôría)	Within the knower: internal object / objective as praxis form: pragma and as grasps / concept (eidos / morphê)	Within the knower	Adaequatio ad rem / pragmadequacy: (a) formation of virtue (arête) (b) truth as alêtheia / anámnesis (uncover / recollection (c) understanding / insight	(a) perfecting (teleiôsis) through practice / training / exercise (áskêsis), (b) dialogics: articulation, bring things into language / into consciousness / distinguishing
	theôría = epistêmê <sub>1</sub>	Dialogue, deduction, deliberation	Insight				



**Table 2: Summary of the commonalities and distinctions between practice and phronetic turn (after Brown, 2012).**

	Practice turn	Phronetic turn
Commonalities	<p>There are features of practices which are not specific to the single case and thus can be theorized.</p> <p>Anti-positivism / constructivism (p. 442)</p> <p>Rejecting the distinction between 'normative' and 'positive' theory so central to a particular kind of modern social science. (p. 445)</p> <p>Focus on practices to bypass the relationship between agency (subjective knowledge) and structure (objective knowledge) (p. 442)</p>	
Distinctions	<p>Social practices</p> <p>Morality</p> <p>Unconsciousness</p> <p>Instinct: immersion in the habitus</p> <p>Christian / Kantian ethical thought</p> <p>Simplicity is at root for virtue</p>	<p>Good life (contemplation of the good)</p> <p>Ethics</p> <p>Consciousness</p> <p>Phrónêsis (faculty of reason shaped by experience)</p> <p>Instinct: hexis and product of an education in the virtues</p> <p>Greek ethical thought</p> <p>Virtue must be self-aware</p>